The Recruiting Office
Providing staff that last

How To
Write a CV

CVs have been connecting qualified candidates with their ideal roles for centuries.

According to an infographic from the National Careers Service, the first curriculum vitae emerged in 1482, and it was written by **Leonardo Da Vinci** when he applied for a local painting job. The nature and role of the CV have changed since then. In the past, connections and status were crucial components of a CV.

Today's recruitment companies like ourselves and the employers we work with use the CV to search for skills, relevant experience and knowledge to choose the right candidate.

While the details on the average CV have changed, the document itself has always been a crucial part of any job search. Your CV is still the first thing our clients ask for when looking for the talent they need, and it's the critical document that decides whether you'll take the next step towards the new role.

Do You Really Need a CV?

Your CV is one of your most critical 'tools' for your career success.

In a world of online portfolios and LinkedIn profiles, it's easy to assume that the CV is outdated. However, this document does more than list your skills and experience. A CV introduces you to an employer as a reputable professional.

Whether you're a graduate or a veteran employee, your CV is your first chance to make a lasting impression on the right people. CVs boost your chances of being selected by recruitment companies and hiring managers and put you on the path to a job interview.

The Purpose of a CV for Employers

Employers and recruitment companies rely on a candidate's CV to separate unqualified candidates from prospective talent who fit the role specification.

When browsing through applications, recruiters and employers don't just look for education and industry knowledge; they're also searching for evidence that the candidate has researched the role. A well-designed CV that's tailored to the job in question demonstrates:

- Passion for the industry.
- Commitment to the role.
- Research and writing skills.
- Evidence of the results they have and therefore can achieve.

CVs show your potential employer that you fit both the demands of the role and the needs of the company culture.

A good CV also saves an employer a lot of valuable time and effort. When recruitment companies can easily select the ideal candidates from a range of well-written CVs, they reduce the chances that the employer will waste time interviewing inappropriate applicants.

Think of your CV as a marketing tool, placing essential details about your skills, background, and education into a beacon that shouts "Hire me".

The Purpose of a CV for Employees

For employees, a CV may not be a legal requirement, but it is the ultimate way to stand out and prove yourself to an employer. On average, only around **2% of candidates** make it to the job

interview when they ‘go it alone’ without the help of a specialist recruitment consultant.

Without a properly put together CV to make a favourable first impression, a prospective employer or recruitment agency will ignore your application and move onto the next person.
Think of your CV as a marketing tool, placing essential details about your skills, background, and education into a beacon that shouts “Hire me” to your hiring manager.

In today’s competition-heavy job market, your CV will:

- Capture the attention of the recruiter or employer.
- Clearly, illustrate your abilities and accomplishments
- Demonstrate that you’re a match for a position or project
- Improve your chances of getting a first interview.

A well-written and properly formatted CV can also act as a confidence boost. Seeing your achievements on paper is a great way to remind yourself that you have what it takes to succeed in a role, particularly when you’re preparing for an upcoming interview.

The Sections to Include on Your CV

Your CV is both a sales brochure and a story of your achievements.

From beginning to end, you need to grab your recruiters’ attention and convince them that you deserve an interview with their client.

Often, this means starting with an introduction into your achievements, backing your claims up with evidence of your

skills and experience, and finishing with additional (relevant) information.

Here's how you can make sure you include the right information in your CV.

Step 1: Be Relevant

A CV must always be tailored to the role you're applying for. At all times when writing your CV, ask yourself: "How will this help me get this particular role?"

For instance, your opening statement is the space where you can sell yourself at the top of page 1. Make sure you address points that the company described in their job description.

For instance, if they're looking for a passionate professional, show how you've devoted yourself to learning more about your sector in your free time.

- Make sure your CV includes everything the job advert asks for.
- Use similar terminology to trigger connections with the recruiter or employer.
- Demonstrate your desire to learn in areas where you don't have the exact experience you need.

Step 2: Keep it Short and to The Point

Remember that the person reading your CV is likely to have dozens, if not hundreds of applications to get through. Keep your CV to two pages, with a maximum of three.

Two pages give you enough room to show your potential, without overwhelming your recruitment consultant and prospective employer.

To make sure that the most critical aspects of your application aren't hidden on page two, introduce a "core skills" section under your personal profile.

In "core skills" you can list your most notable abilities and achievements related to the role.

Throughout the rest of your CV, assess every word critically, and remove anything that isn't necessary.

Step 3: Structure your CV into Sections

With a focus on relevancy, structure your CV into these sections:

- Personal Details: At The Recruiting Office we frequently hear from employers who receive CVs that miss out personal details like a name, email address, contact number and address. Make sure all of these details are at the top of the page.

- Personal statement: Use the first paragraph on your CV to explain who you are and why you're ideal for the specific role you're applying for. Keep the section succinct. Hobbies and interests aren't a necessary part of your CV. However, mentioning relevant avocations can make your application stand out. Avoid saying that you like "socialising with friends."

Assess every word critically, and remove anything that isn't necessary.

- Work experience: Include all relevant work experience that demonstrates your ability to thrive in a similar role. Include the name of the organisation, your job title, and the time you spent in the post.

- Achievements: Demonstrate how your previous experience gave you the skills you need to excel in this new role. Make it clear how you'd apply the skills you've earned to the position in question and support your achievements with quantifiable evidence. For instance "I managed a team of 10 and achieved a 20% increase in sales over 3 months."]

- Education: Only list educational achievements relevant to the job. The number of educational details included on a CV will depend on your circumstances. If you have more educational achievements than work experience, you may give this section more focus.

The Most Important Elements in a CV

A recruitment agency will look for key components when searching for the right candidates.

When you're applying for a new role, you aim to appear as more qualified and compelling than the other candidates. This means taking every possible opportunity to impress.

To ensure you make the right first impression, ensure you always include these essential elements on your CV.

1. Up-to-Date Contact Information

As mentioned above, your contact information is the first thing a recruiter will see on your CV. Making sure that you include this information is only the first step.

As you enter your contact details, remember:

- Remove any old business email addresses or work numbers.
- Double-check that you've spelled your email address correctly and that your phone number is correct.
- Consider updating your email address. If you set your address up years ago with something like "FoxySarah28@gmail.com", replace it with a professional new address like SarahG@gmail.com.
- Include links to relevant social profiles. Your new employer or sector recruiter may appreciate the opportunity to learn more about you on your LinkedIn profile.

2. Excellent Formatting and Appearance

CVs are all about making the right first impression. This means that the document's appearance needs to demonstrate the time and care you've put into crafting it.

Formatting and structure on your CV play a big role in how recruiters perceive you. Aim to make the document as easy-to-read as possible.

Avoid rambling paragraphs and break up the content with bullet points and headings. Remember with smartphone technology taking over the world the first time your CV is read could be on a recruitment consultants' phone and there is nothing worse than looking at 'bunched up text that is difficult to read.

- Choose a font that looks good both on a screen and printed, such as Arial or Helvetica.
- Head your page with your name, not "Curriculum Vitae."
- Include plenty of white space.

Cut out any skills that aren't relevant to the role.

If you're sending your CV as a digital document, make sure to save it with an easy-to-find title like "John Smith - CV."

I know this might seem totally logical to you and yet here at The Recruiting Office we see CVs every day where the individual has not taken the time to make their presentation stand out. There is a well known saying that says; "the way you do anything is the way you do everything", imagine then the impression a rushed CV might give to a potential new employer; let's explore this more.

3. Accurate Grammar and Spelling

Aside from skills and experience, your recruiter or employer will also be looking for things like attention to detail when reading your CV.

Remember that the smallest mistake can make a significant impact on your ability to get a job, and your word processor won't pick up every typo. The sentence "I am an accomplished Manger" won't stand out on your computer, but it's a red flag to an employer.

Read through your CV at least three times before sending it. Consider asking a trusted friend or mentor to read the document too, as sometimes it's hard to pick up issues in your writing. Look for:

- Bad spelling
- Incomplete sentences
- Long, rambling paragraphs
- Filler words like, very, actually etc.

4. Selling Points: Roles, Responsibilities, and Skills

Your experiences are some of the most essential details on your CV. Examine the job description for the role you're applying for

and focus on using your knowledge and relevant skills to prove you have what your employer is looking for. For instance:

- Roles: If you're applying for a managerial position: Highlight roles where you acted as a leader. If you have no prior management experience, look for other ways to exemplify your leadership skills. Perhaps you lead a volunteer team for your community?

- Responsibilities: When listing prior positions, you'll need to include some information about what your job involved. Don't list everything you did in your last post. Instead, focus an echoing some of the responsibilities listed in the job description.

- Skills: Cut out any skills that aren't relevant to the role. The goal here isn't to show that you're a person of many talents. Instead, focus on proving that you're specifically suited to this particular role.

Cut out any skills that aren't relevant to the role.

5. Facts and Evidence

There are plenty of stories out there of people who have embarrassed themselves by "embellishing" their CVs. While it might be tempting to put some extra flourishes on your application by bending the truth, it's not worth the risk.

The digital world means that it's easier than ever for recruiters and employers to find out whether a candidate is exaggerating their achievements or making them up on their CV. To ensure that you come across as honest and trustworthy, make sure that you use quantifiable facts and evidence.

If you claim that you've accomplished something incredible for your last employer, explain the details in depth using numbers and statistics. Be prepared to provide reference details if necessary too.

6. Specific Words and Phrases

The right language can make or break your application. Unfortunately, figuring out which words to use isn't always easy. Start by making a list of any repetitive terms you can see in the job description or on the company's website. This will help you to choose words that create a synergy with a recruiter or employer.

Once you have a list of terms to use, create a second list of words to avoid. Overused clichés will either leave your recruiter rolling their eyes, or they'll mean you just blend into a sea of other candidates. Words to avoid include:

- Go-Getter
- Goal-driven
- Out-of-the-box
- Multi-tasker
- Self-Motivated

Should You Add a Photo to Your CV?

There are plenty of additional details that you can add to a CV if you feel that they're relevant. For instance, if the role you're applying for requires you to drive frequently, then assure your recruiter that you have a clean driving license. If you're going for a role in web design, direct them to a recent app or website you've created.

One recent debate in the recruitment world is whether it's useful to add a photo to a CV. On the one hand, a picture can make your application stand out, and it's becoming increasingly common across mainland Europe. However, some people find a picture distracting and believe it may lead to unintentional bias.

Whether you should add a picture to your CV will depend on the role. If you'll frequently be working behind the scenes in an office, then it doesn't matter what you look like. However, if you're a front-of-house employee dealing with customers, your employer might want to see that you have a professional and friendly appearance.

What Not to Include on Your CV

As there are crucial things that you absolutely must have on your CV, there are also important elements to leave out.

Many candidates still believe that the more information they include on their CV, the better their chances of earning that critical first interview will be.

However, the truth is that recruiters and employers are searching for only the most relevant and specific information. With that in mind, go through your CV and remove any of the following elements you find:

- Outdated educational achievements: If you have a master's degree in your industry, then you don't need to include GCSE results too. Stick to your most recent accomplishments.

- Irrelevant work experience: No matter how proud you are of your work in a previous role, only include work experience that's connected to the position you're applying for now.

- References: If employers want to speak to your references, they can ask you for them. References are an outdated portion of a CV that simply take up space.

- Personal pronouns: Use phrases like "Accomplished manager" instead of "I am an experienced manager."

Many businesses have their own internal names for specific technologies and processes. Avoid any words from your CV that wouldn't apply to the entire sector.

- Company-specific jargon: Many businesses have their own internal names for specific technologies and processes. Avoid any words from your CV that wouldn't apply to the entire sector. Instead, replace them with phrases or terms you may have noticed on the job description for the role you're applying for.

- Meaningless buzzwords: "Ninja", and "People pleaser" are all phrases that don't say much about you. Focus on terms that will highlight your skills and the corresponding results they can deliver for your new employer.

- Fancy formatting: Headers, footers, images, and charts aren't necessary on a CV. Many of today's recruiters use applicant-tracking systems today, and excessive formatting can cause the software to scramble your application.

- Opinions: CVs are all about the facts, don't use subjective words to describe yourself. For instance, your CV isn't a place to tell your hiring manager how "likeable" you are. Let them form that opinion themselves when they meet you.

- Reasons you left previous roles: There's no need to over-explain your job history. If a hiring manager has additional questions, they can bring them up with you in the interview.

Your cover letter is another opportunity to show you've researched the business.

Should You Include a Cover Letter?

A great way to give an extra kick to your CV, and make sure it stands out, is to include a cover letter. Your cover letter is another opportunity to show you've researched the business and made sure that you're appropriate for the role. Within your cover letter, you can go beyond the skills and education outlined in your CV to show a recruiter or employer that you:

- Understand the sector and their business: Highlight how you can help the company achieve their goals.

- Will fit with the company's culture and demonstrate the correct attitude: Show that you've learned the organisation's values, and that they match your own.

- Are willing to adapt to change and learn new skills: Demonstrate your commitment to continuous learning and improvement by mentioning what you're doing to improve your skills.

Importantly, if you do include a cover letter with your CV, don't just write about why you want to work for the business.

Explain why you're a good fit for the role, and the benefits that you can bring to that organisation. At the same time, avoid anything generic that may look as though you've copied and pasted it from an application for a previous job.

Creating the Ideal CV for Your Role

Having a good degree or a history with a well-known company won't automatically get you an interview today. Today's employers are looking for people that fit with their company culture and demonstrate the skills and attitude necessary to deliver in a specific role.

Your CV is your chance to introduce yourself to a recruitment company or hiring manager in a meaningful way.

If you can show the person looking at your CV that you match the job description as closely as possible, then you'll get the interview.

Good luck!

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About us

At The Recruiting Office we recognise how hard it can be for non HR staff to fit recruitment around their regular day to day duties and to ensure that job specifications, advertisements, selection and interview processes are without bias and are effective in identifying the best possible candidates.

We know how vital pro-active candidate sourcing can be in an increasingly candidate short market and we understand that many non recruitment professionals struggle to pro-actively identify and engage with suitable passive candidates.

And we know that modern businesses sometimes need to engage skilled personnel on a non permanent basis to support specific projects or changing business needs.

If you are experiencing issues or concerns with any aspect of the recruitment process - from writing job and person specifications to effective on boarding, from engaging with passive candidates to required document checks and when to undertake them - we can help!

At The Recruiting Office we have over 40 years experience of supporting Norfolk employers through every aspect of the recruitment process and our comprehensive, knowledgeable, compliant and ethical recruitment services really work!

For a no obligation discussion of the recruitment issues you are experiencing and the solutions we can offer - call us now on **01603 964816** or email **neil@therecruitingoffice.co.uk**

Your next actions

Connect with us in multiple ways

You can connect with either of us on multiple social media channels including LinkedIn and Facebook

https://www.linkedin.com/in/neil-scarborough-recruiter-for-all-your-norwich-and-norfolk-recruitment-needs/

https://www.linkedin.com/in/adela-matin-cert-rp-2a98a333/

https://www.linkedin.com/company/5517696/admin/

Or call 01603 964816 or email Neil neil@therecruitingoffice.co.uk or Adela Adela@therecruitingoffice.co.uk to book a private recruitment strategy call.

Best wishes
Neil and Adela

P.S. Our recruitment services are without charge until/unless our successful candidate accepts your job offer and in the unlikely event they don't work out we offer a 100 day 100% refund guarantee!

Client Testimonials

"What makes The Recruiting Office our agency of choice is the ability Adela and Neil have to fully engage and understand our requirements. They understand that we are looking for people who want to be part of our brand. This is reflected in the quality of candidate they place in both temporary and permanent positions. This is a true partnership and one I believe will be long lasting and important in the success and growth of our depot."
Simon

"The Recruiting Office has found our company a succession of quality staff that are continuing to provide first class service to our customers in East Anglia. The professional and thoroughly well organised manner that The Recruiting Office operate make them a pleasure to do business with."
Graham

Candidate Testimonials

Just a quick email to say thank you for your help in getting me to interview. What makes The Recruiting Office different stand head and shoulders ahead of other agencies is the care and attention the staff put into understanding not only what the potential employer does and requires but also understanding not only the skill set of the potential employee but also their personality thus making the position/employee a match better. This coupled with your attention to detail and contact, updates, feed back and genuine interest in all aspects of the process makes for an outstanding business model.
Mark

"I would recommend to anyone looking for short or long term employment to use the services of the Recruiting Office.
The help and support I received was invaluable-from CV analysis to a better understanding of the current work market (after coming out of a long-term job) I was in a placement within a couple of days.
All consultants I dealt with were friendly, polite and professional.
My placement lead to permanent employment, however, I would not hesitate to use the services of The Recruiting Office again if my situation changed."
Charlotte